

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 COLOMB 01537 01 OF 02 040553Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 MCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01

TRSE-00 /070 W

-----040612Z 120954 /15

R 021040Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7218

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 COLOMBO 1537

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, CE

SUBJ: MAY DAY MARKED BY PRE-ELECTION RHETORIC AND SOME VIOLENCE

1. SUMMARY: IN MAY DAY RALLIES DISTINGUISHED MORE BY PARTISAN POLITICAL RHETORIC THAN BY ANY EMPHASIS ON WORKERS, THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS DEMONSTRATED THEIR DRAWING POWER AND TRIED OUT THEIR CAMPAIGN SPEECHES BEFORE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SUPPORTERS. ATTACKS ON BUSES AND ROCK-THROWING BY RIVAL FACTIONS WERE COMMON OUTSIDE COLOMBO, AND CAUSED SOME SERIOUS INJURIES; INSIDE THE CITY, REINFORCED POLICE RIOT SQUADS GENERALLY KEEPTHE PEACE. SIXTEEN PEOPLE DIED WHEN A BOAT CAP-SIZED WHILE RETURNING FROM THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) RALLY; HOWEVER, THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT AND UNRELATED TO INTER-PARTY VIOLENCE. RALLIES RAN ON EXPECTED LINES WITH THE PRIME MINISTER LAMBASTING THE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP), HINTING THAT HER PARTY WOULD "KEEP ITS DOORS OPEN" IF THE LEFT PARTIES WISHED TO RETURN, AND REITERATING THAT THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY WOULD NOT BE DISSOLVED BEFORE MAY 22. THE UNP HEARD LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE PROMISE THAT HIS PARTY WOULD LEAD

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 COLOMB 01537 01 OF 02 040553Z

EXEMPLARY LIVES "WHEN WE COME TO POWER," SHUNNING NEPOTISM, POLITICAL VICTIMISATION, AND ABUSE OF THE MASS MEDIA. THE UNITED LEFT FRONT (ULF) RALLY, PRESIDED OVER BY FOREIGN MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES T.B. SUBASINGHE BROUGHT TOGETHER THE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP), THE COMMUNIST PARTY (CP) AND NANDA ELLAWALA'S PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP). AT LSSP REQUEST, VASUDEVA NANAYAKKARA'S EXPELLED LSSPERS WERE PHYSICALLY PRE-

VENTED BY POLICE FROM JOINING THE ULF RALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. MAY DAY 1977, COMING THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE CONSTITUTIONAL DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY, WAS EVEN MORE DOMINATED BY PARTISAN POLITICS THAN USUAL. NO LABOR-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE MADE AND PARTY TRADE UNION LEADERS TOOK A BACK SEAT TO THE POLITICIANS. EACH PARTY, IN ITS EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE ITS POPULAR STRENGTH, RECRUITED HEAVILY FROM PARTY BRANCHES, WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, AND YOUTH LEAGUES, WHICH TAKEN TOGETHER PROBABLY OUTNUMBERED TRADE UNIONISTS, EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN THE UNITED LEFT FRONT RALLY.

3. THE INTENSITY OF FEELING CAME THROUGH IN NUMEROUS ATTACKS BY ONE PARTY OR ANOTHER. ROCK AND BOTTLE-THROWING INJURED LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE (UPWARDS OF 100, ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS) AND, IN ONE INCIDENT NEAR COLOMBO, THE POLICE REPORTEDLY FIRED ON A CROWD TO BREAK UP A BRAWL. AT LEAST FOUR PEOPLE WERE CRITICALLY INJURED IN THAT INCIDENT. ALMOST ALL CLASHES TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE COLOMBO BETWEEN BUSLOADS OF PEOPLE COMING IN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMONSTRATION. IN THE CITY ITSELF, HEAVY POLICE REINFORCEMENTS, AIDED BY SOPHISTICATED COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT INSTALLED FOR LAST YEAR'S NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, MANAGED TO CONTROL DEMONSTRATORS. THE ONLY DEATHS OCCURRED NOT IN INTER-PARTY SKIRMISHES BUT ON THE OCEAN WHEN A FISHING BOAT RETURNING FROM THE SLFP RALLY CAPSIZED. SIXTEEN PEOPLE WERE BELIEVED DEAD.

4. THERE WERE NO SURPRISES IN THE CONTENT OF SPEECHES AT THE RALLIES, WHICH DEALT LESS WITH ISSUES THAN PERSONALITIES. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 COLOMB 01537 01 OF 02 040553Z

THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER SPEAKERS AT THE SLFP RALLY AIMED MOST OF THEIR FIRE AT THE UNP AND ITS LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE, WARNING THE VOTERS NOT TO BELIEVE "FALSE PROMISES" OF "POWER-HUNGRY POLITICIANS." SHE CONTRASTED THE UNP'S 1965-70 RECORD WITH THAT OF HER GOVERNMENT OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS WITH REGARD TO PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND NATIONALIZING PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESSES. SHE ALSO CRITICIZED THE LSSP AND CP FOR ACCUSING HER OF ABUSING THE EMERGENCY AND CALLING UPON HER TO FREE "POLITICAL PRISONERS," PRESUMABLY MEANING CONVICTED INSURGENTS. INSISTING THAT THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS, SHE POINTED OUT THAT ALL THOSE NOW JAILED HAD BEEN CONVICTED IN COURTS OF LAW. IN A HINT OF POSSIBLE RECONCILIATION WITH HER FORMER COALITION PARTNERS, SHE SAID THE PARTY WOULD "KEEP ITS DOORS OPEN IF ANYBODY WAS PREPARED TO JOIN HANDS WITH IT."

5. DESPITE SPECULATION THAT THE PM WOULD DISSOLVE THE NOW-PROROGUED NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY BEFORE MAY 19, WHEN IT IS SCHEDULED TO MEET FOR A TWO-DAY FINAL SESSION, SHE ONCE AGAIN STATED THAT IT WOULD BE DISSOLVED AUTOMATICALLY ON THE LAST

DAY OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL LIFE.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 COLOMB 01537 02 OF 02 040600Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 OMB-01 MCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01  
TRSE-00 /070 W

-----040612Z 121050 /12

R 021040Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7219  
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 COLOMBO 1537

6. THE UNP RALLY WAS DOMINATED BY CONFIDENT OPTIMISM THAT THAT DAY, MAY 22, WOULD BE THE "DAY OF EMANCIPATION" FOR THE COUNTRY AND PRESUMABLY FOR THE UNP. THE MARCHERS' SLOGANS ATTACKED THE PERQUISITES OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS ("OUR CHILDREN ARE HUNGRY; THEIR CHILDREN ARE ABROAD." "WE ATE MANIOC; FOR SIRIMA, HAM, BACON, WHISKY, AND BRANDY FROM EUROPE") AND THE SPEECHES PIOUSLY PROMISED THAT "WHEN WE COME TO POWER" THE UNP WOULD AVOID THE POLITICAL VICTIMIZATION, NEPOTISM, AND ABUSE OF THE MEDIA OF WHICH THEY ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT. DEPUTY LEADER R. PREMADASA WARNED GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATS AND POLITICIANS THAT "EVERY CENT LOST TO THE PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF YOUR MISDEEDS WILL BE RECOVERED FROM YOUR PRIVATE PROPERTIES WHEN WE COME TO POWER IN AUGUST NEXT."

7. THE UNITED LEFT FRONT WAS NOT AS UNITED AS ADVERTISED. WHEN EXPELLED LSSP M.P. VASUDEVA NANAYAKKARA ATTEMPTED TO LEAD HIS OWN SUPPORTERS IN THE ULF RALLY, HIS GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY 1500 WAS SURROUNDED BY POLICE WHO REFUSED TO LET THEM PROCEED, ON ORDERS FROM THE LEADERS OF THE ULF WHO CLAIMED THEY WERE A THREAT TO THE PEACE OF THE DEMONSTRATION. OTHERWISE THE RALLY PROCEEDED PEACEFULLY, PRESIDED OVER BY FORMER SLFP MINISTER T.B. SUBASINGHE WHO APPEARS TO BE THE COMPROMISE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 COLOMB 01537 02 OF 02 040600Z

CHOICE TO LEAD THE ULF INTO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LSSP, CP, AND NANDA ELLAWALA'S PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY SPOKE, ELLAWALA IMPLIED THAT TWO OF THE THREE SPINOFF GROUPS FROM THE 1971 INSURGENCY (MAHINDA WIJESEKERA'S MAHAJANA VIMUKTI PERAMUNA AND THE CASTRO DHARMASEKERA GROUP) WOULD BE WELCOME IN THE ULF.

8. NUMEROUS SMALLER GROUPS HELD THEIR OWN RALLIES TO CELEBRATE MAY DAY. ONE SUCH WAS THE JANATA VIMUKTI PERAMUNA, WHICH HAS SPURNED TIES WITH ANY OTHER GROUP. THE JVP RECALLED THE ORIGINS OF MAY DAY IN CHICAGO, AND THEN, REFERRING TO THE UNP, SAID THE PARTY COULDN'T SOLVE THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM, SINCE THAT REMAINED UNSOLVED EVEN IN THE "MOTHERLAND OF THE UNP" -- THE UNITED STATES. ANOTHER MEETING FEATURED BALA TAMPOE'S CEYLON MERCANTILE UNION, THE REMAINS OF THE MAHAJANA EKSATH PERAMUNA (M.E.P.), AND PRINS GUNASEKERA'S SRI LANKA VIMUKTI BALAVEGAYA. POOR ATTENDANCE WAS BLAMED ON NON-COOPERATION OF THE BUS COMPANY.

9. COMMENT: NO MINDS WERE CHANGED BY THE MAY DAY MEETINGS; EACH PARTY PROVED IT COULD GATHER AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS TO COLOMBO. ALL THE RALLIES WERE ESSENTIALLY MARKING TIME, SINCE THE CAMPAIGN HAS NOT YET FORMALLY BEGUN AND THE PARTIES ARE STILL DELAYING PUBLISHING THEIR MANIFESTOS AND CANDIDATE LISTS. NEVERTHELESS THE RALLIES AND THE ATTENDANT VIOLENCE GAVE AN INDICATION, IF ANOTHER WAS NEEDED, THAT PASSIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH AND THAT A CAMPAIGN WITHOUT SERIOUS INCIDENT APPEARS INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY. END COMMENT.  
REED

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, SPEECHES, CIVIL DISORDERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 02-May-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977COLOMB01537  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770155-1168  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** COLOMBO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t197705105/aaaadmrt.tel  
**Line Count:** 201  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 3749e287-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 29-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2334822  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MAY DAY MARKED BY PRE-ELECTION RHETORIC AND SOME VIOLENCE  
**TAGS:** PINT, ELAB, CE  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/3749e287-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009